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CHARGES U.S. GAGES CUBANS ON MISSILES

Island Bristles, Senators Told

BY WILLARD EDWARDS
(Chicago Tribune Press Service)

Washington, March 7—Senate investigators were told today that the Johnson administration is suppressing evidence of Cuba's rapid development as a Russian missile base.

American intelligence agents in Miami, acting under instructions from Washington, were accused of using a combination of threats and bribes to pressure Cuban refugees into silence about huge ballistic missiles they have seen on the island.

This charge came from Paul Bethel, a former foreign service officer and White House aid, who now serves as director of the Citizens' Committee for a Free Cuba.

"Decision Is Political"

"I think the decision to keep Cuba out of the public consciousness is political," he told the Senate internal security subcommittee. "Information about missiles in Cuba upsets the delicate balance of accommodation with the Soviet Union which is the basis of current policy."

Bethel, who was attached to the American embassy in Havana when Fidel Castro seized

control, revealed the results of a confidential source's investigation by hundreds of Cuban exiles. They described the island, 90 miles from Florida, as a military menace now far more threatening than when the late President Kennedy and Russian Premier Nikita Khrushchev clashed over the discovery of missiles there in October, 1962.

Big One Reported

Bethel said he had "complete, credible" eye-witness accounts from more than 60 exiles concerning the recent movements in Cuba of missiles 70 to 80 feet in length and five to seven feet in diameter which would place them in the intermediate range ballistic missile (IRBM) category, capable of attacking targets 800 to 1,500 miles distant.

"I have one recent report of a missile 150 feet long which would make it an intercontinental ballistic type (ICBM)," he said. "I can't believe it but I am checking it out. The missiles which are described would seem to be the Russian T-2 or T-4."

The missiles are always moved at night on tractor-trailers and power blackouts are enforced in towns along the route they travel, according to the accounts given Bethel. They are completely under Russian control altho Cubans have been permitted to operate the smaller SAM [surface-to-air] missiles which are an anti-aircraft weapon.

"Is this evidence known to the defense and state departments?" asked Strom Thurmond [R., S.C.], acting chairman.

"The intelligence community, CIA [central intelligence agency], DIA [defense intelligence agency] and the rest, have a large screening group in Miami, and they know it," said Bethel. "Refugees are told by these intelligence agents to keep their mouths shut. They are promised jobs if they don't talk."

Assertions of "No Proof"

"Meanwhile, the state and defense departments keep issuing stereotyped assertions that they have 'no proof' of missiles in Cuba."

Bethel said Cubans are convinced that Russia never kept its agreement to remove all ballistics missiles from Cuba.

The island is honeycombed with tremendous construction program has enlarged them, reinforced them with concrete, and opened miles of subterranean tunnels, 20 feet wide and 20 feet high, thru which trucks and tractors can move at will.

As early as August, 1963, ten months after the missile crisis, Bethel said Cuban refugees told him, big missiles were being landed from Russian oil tankers and transported to caves.

Gives Names, Dates

Bethel supplied names, dates, and places in spotting other military developments in Cuba. The Russians have two "cities," he said, where Cubans are forbidden. They have built submarine pens and underground hospital. A radar system covers the surrounded Caribbean areas, and a radio transmitter three times as powerful as any United States transmitter, is capable of blotting out 71 American stations, he said, adding that broadcasts are aimed at Negroes in the United States, inciting them to violence. Ten thousand guerrillas are trained each year for export to foment revolution in other Latin American countries, he said.

"To sum it up, Cuba is a nation bristling with preparations for war," he told the subcommittee. "No one can say how many Russians are in Cuba, but it is certainly in the thousands, and perhaps in the tens of thousands. The island is a base for subversion of the hemisphere with the United States as the eventual target. Yet Cuba is not even on the agenda for discussion at President Johnson's conference with presidents of the other American republics in mid-April."

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